

River District Framework Plan

Rockford, Illinois
January 2003



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The River District is the regional center of northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin's entertainment, cultural, tourism and government activities. We will capitalize on existing assets, encourage meaningful growth, and attract new residents. The River District will be a vital and attractive place to live, work, shop and play.

We are heartened by the energy and commitment of the citizens of Rockford. They have created a remarkable vision, consensus and excitement around the River District, and we are deeply grateful for their efforts. Now the goal is to carry forth this vital work. Let us reinvigorate Rockford's historic relationship to the Rock River for our city and its meaning for the region.

State of the River District

The River District is poised at the beginning of a renaissance. Many investments and improvements are already made (refurbishing of the Coronado Theatre, improvements to Davis Park and Riverfront Museum Park, rebirth of east State Street business district). Additionally, there are renewed commitments for further investments in the River District (new federal courthouse, plans for new county public safety building, planned improvements to Illinois Route 251).

The River District can again become the vital heart of the community's, as well as the economic force that fuels growth into the future. The river itself is the community's greatest asset and should be the focus of future revitalization efforts.

Our findings are showing that there are excellent opportunities to:

Leverage investment in a new federal courthouse to revitalize the southwest area of the River District into a vibrant, mixed-use gateway. Improvements could include new public plazas, redevelopment of industrial properties for commercial and residential uses and improved public access to the river.

Expand and complete Davis Park as a major regional venue.

Provide continuous riverfront access for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the River District.

Develop a convention/exhibition center with hotel on the riverfront to strengthen the tourism opportunities in Rockford and the River District.

Improve access and circulation throughout the River District by converting several one-way streets to two-way traffic.

Create a mixed-use festival park, destination retail/entertainment and boating district in the heart of the River District.

Form a campus-like environment for existing and future museum and non-profit organizations within the River District. In addition, the introduction of IMAX theater will further strengthen this area.

Develop new housing attractive to those



Federal Courthouse



Festival Park



Art Museum

seeking an urban environment with ease of access to the river, and with all amenities and resources within the River District.

Improve the Main Street Mall as a gathering space for all residents, employees, and visitors to the River District.

Add a new state of the art motion picture cineplex to anchor the eastern portion of east State Street commercial district. Offer a low-cost entertainment options within the heart of the community.

Use streetscape improvements to connect the riverfront to remainder of the River District and strengthen the identities of residential, commercial and cultural districts.



Streetscape Character



Movie Theater



Townhouse



Streetscape



Plaza



Figure 1: Existing Land Use Districts

The study has identified the following existing subdistricts that need to be recognized and serve as the foundation for new efforts.

- Madison Street
- St. James Neighborhood
- East State Historic District
- Coronado-Haskell Neighborhood
- Haight Village
- Riverfront Museum Park and Burpee Museum of Natural History
- Main Street Mall
- West Industrial/Mixed Use
- Riverfront Esplanade
- MetroCentre/Davis Park
- County Courthouse

Based on the input received from the Steering Committee, area stakeholders and the public, the following Revitalization Statement was established to guide the River District Framework Plan and future revitalization efforts.

The River District is the regional center of the northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin entertainment, cultural, tourism and government activities. Stakeholders and future revitalization actions will capitalize on the River District's existing assets, encourage meaningful growth in sectors that contribute to its position as a regional center, and attract new residents to housing in riverfront development that is unique in the region. The River District will be a vital and attractive place to live, work, shop and play.

Core Revitalization Principles	Framework Objectives
Capitalize on the River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Eliminate blight and replace with beautiful amenities, open space, etc. •Capture value by redeveloping underutilized riverfront property •Create places for year-round activity that bring people to the river •Develop places, connections and uses that bring the value of the river inland
Build on Economic Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Encourage expansion of entertainment, recreation, culture and government •Encourage development that increases the market for these uses or otherwise supports growth and long-term viability
Reinvent the River District as a Premium and Diverse Residential District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Assemble appropriate sites for new development •Strengthen and streamline development policies and procedures •Encourage infill and rehabilitation of existing neighborhoods •Provide neighborhood amenities
Create Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improve streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces and the uses lining them to connect activity centers •Reduce the number of one-way streets to improve traffic circulation and accessibility •Expand transportation alternatives and facilities, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit, rail and water
Create a New Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Aggressively and unanimously advertise the positive attributes •Work closely with the local media to market and promote the River District
Encourage Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Define roles for the private, public and non-profit sectors •Engage all city residents as stakeholders of the River District

Figure 2: Framework Principles and Objectives

Constraints and Opportunities

Although the River District has many important assets, there are key elements of the urban fabric that are missing. To understand what fundamentals are absent or need to be linked is vital to the future success of the River District. These include:

Discontinuous riverfront access for pedestrians and bicyclists. Improve existing facilities and create new ones where lacking to create a continuous riverfront system.

Land uses or buildings not capitalizing on their Rock River location, such as Madison Street industrial. Find alternative locations, for uses that do not benefit from a riverfront location, and open up new spaces for development of housing and recreation.

Vacant buildings and land that is not contributing to the physical or economic welfare of Rockford or the River District. Ingersoll, Amerock, Tapco, Armory buildings are all vacant. ComEd site is also vacant riverfront property. Adaptive reuse of buildings where appropriate and identify new uses with market potential in revitalized River District. Eliminate existing blight and consider as a land bank opportunity

Lack of identity within different sub-areas of the River District. Use changes in land use to strengthen focus of major activity nodes. Use streetscape improvements to promote identity.

Lack of housing in the River District. Some small ventures such as the Brown Building Lofts and Morrissey Building, but not enough to instill confidence in River District as a place to live or develop more housing. Identify redevelopment sites for housing geared to young professionals, empty nesters and others that would be attracted to an urban environment with housing types and amenities not available elsewhere in the community.

Lack of accessibility within and between the River District. One-way streets and Main Street Mall create impediments to traffic flow and circulation. Create better connections through



Riverfront Esplanade



Amerock Building



Existing Housing Stock



Main Street Mall

roadway improvements, wayfinding improvements, and alternative modes of transportation, including pedestrian/bicycle facilities, trolleys, water taxis, etc.

Inability to compete with other cities for larger conventions and trade shows. MetroCentre provides existing space but limited in terms of size and amenities. Also, no hotel in River District, which is key to supporting a convention/exhibition space. Find an appropriate location for new investment in a convention/exhibition center that would expand the capacity of the MetroCentre. Combine this with a hotel that could serve the conventions and support general tourism in the River District.

Lack of low-cost entertainment anchors to help support existing and new entertainment/commercial districts in the River District. Major movie theaters are located outside the River District and in adjacent communities. Other family entertainment venues such as Coronado Theatre and New American Theater cost more. Opportunity to add new megaplex theater and IMAX.



MetroCentre



Main Street



Coronado Theatre



Commercial Buildings

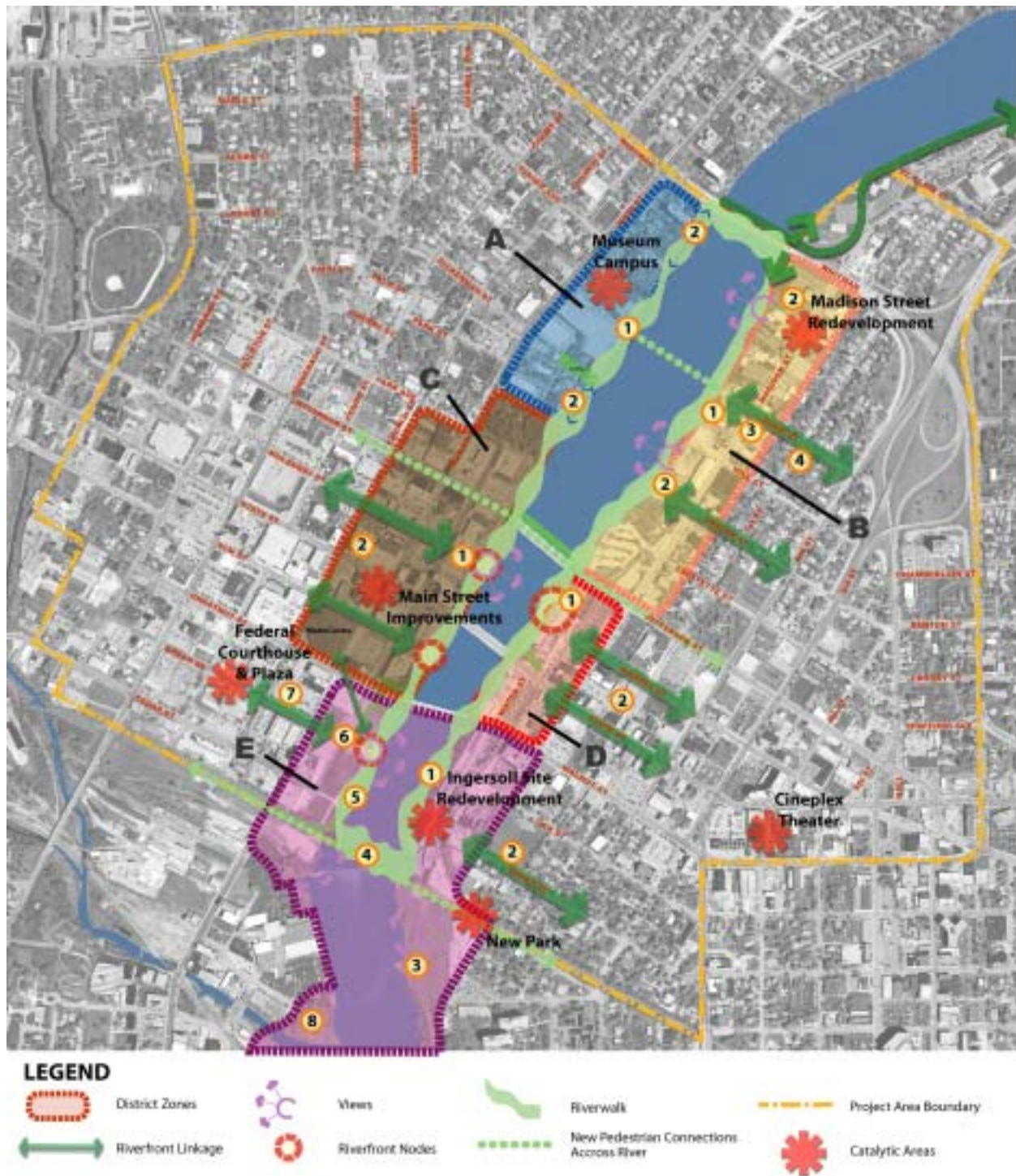


Figure 3: River Character Zones

Riverfront Character Zones

As the Rock River flows through Rockford, the river and shoreline display a variety of different uses and character. Each section of the riverfront possesses its own unique flavor and merits treatment as a distinct planning district. Figure 3 illustrates the locations of the different character zones within the River District study area, as well as locations of linkages that can provide important physical connections between inland development, activity centers and the riverfront.

A

1 Enhance Museum Campus
Activate the riverfront to help create campus atmosphere with outdoor plazas, a marina, riverwalk, educational facilities, restaurant, etc. Relate design theme to campus anchors. Explore opportunities for a new pedestrian bridge to connect with the east bank at Olive St.

2 Expand Riverwalk
Explore opportunities to obtain easements from adjacent residential property owners. Investigate bicycle improvements on Main St.

B

1 Riverfront Redevelopment
Create a mixed-use park, retail, entertainment, and boating district along the riverfront. Maintain a minimum 100' building setback from the river's edge for public access. Connect districts to the north and south with a new riverwalk.

2 Business Retention
Incorporate uses compatible with the riverfront mixed-use district, such as the Brewery Building, Lombardi Club and Verdi Club, into the plan.

3 New Housing
Encourage residential development at several locations along the eastern frontage of Madison St.

4 Street Connections
Use streetscape improvements on Olive and Prairie Sts. to connect the neighborhood west of Madison with the riverfront and new riverfront development. Use streetscape improvements to Madison St. to unite and create a new image for the development.

C

1 Riverwalk
Improve access to and amenities within existing riverwalk areas. Emphasize improvements at Mulberry and Elm Sts., and coordinate with adjacent property owners.

2 Street Connections
Use streetscape improvements on Mulberry, Elm, and Main Sts. to connect the riverfront with uses to the west. Reopen Main St. to vehicle traffic but maintain areas for sidewalk dining, street performers, art, etc.

D

1 Riverwalk
Explore opportunities to create a riverwalk adjacent to the Rockford Register Star. Improve access to and amenities within the existing riverwalk.

2 Street Connections
Use streetscape improvements on Market, State, and Water Sts. to connect the River East district with the riverfront and to create a unified image for this area.

E

1 Riverfront Redevelopment
Evaluate the feasibility of reusing or redeveloping the Ingersoll site. If redeveloped for housing, relate in scale and design to be compatible with Haight Village. Create a new recreation facility on the Com Ed property.

2 Adaptive Reuse
Encourage reuse of Watch Factory and School District buildings if redevelopment occurs.

3 Street Connections
Use streetscape improvements on Grove St. to connect Haight Village with the riverfront.

4 Expand Davis Park
Expand Davis Park by acquiring the parking garage at Chestnut and Main Sts.

5 Street Connections
Vacate Green St. to provide a new plaza connection to unite the riverfront and all uses leading to the new federal courthouse.

6 Pedestrian Connections
Explore ability to convert UP Railway into a pedestrian/bicycle facility. Provide continuous riverwalk. Explore opportunities to obtain easements from Esterline Whitney to extend riverwalk.

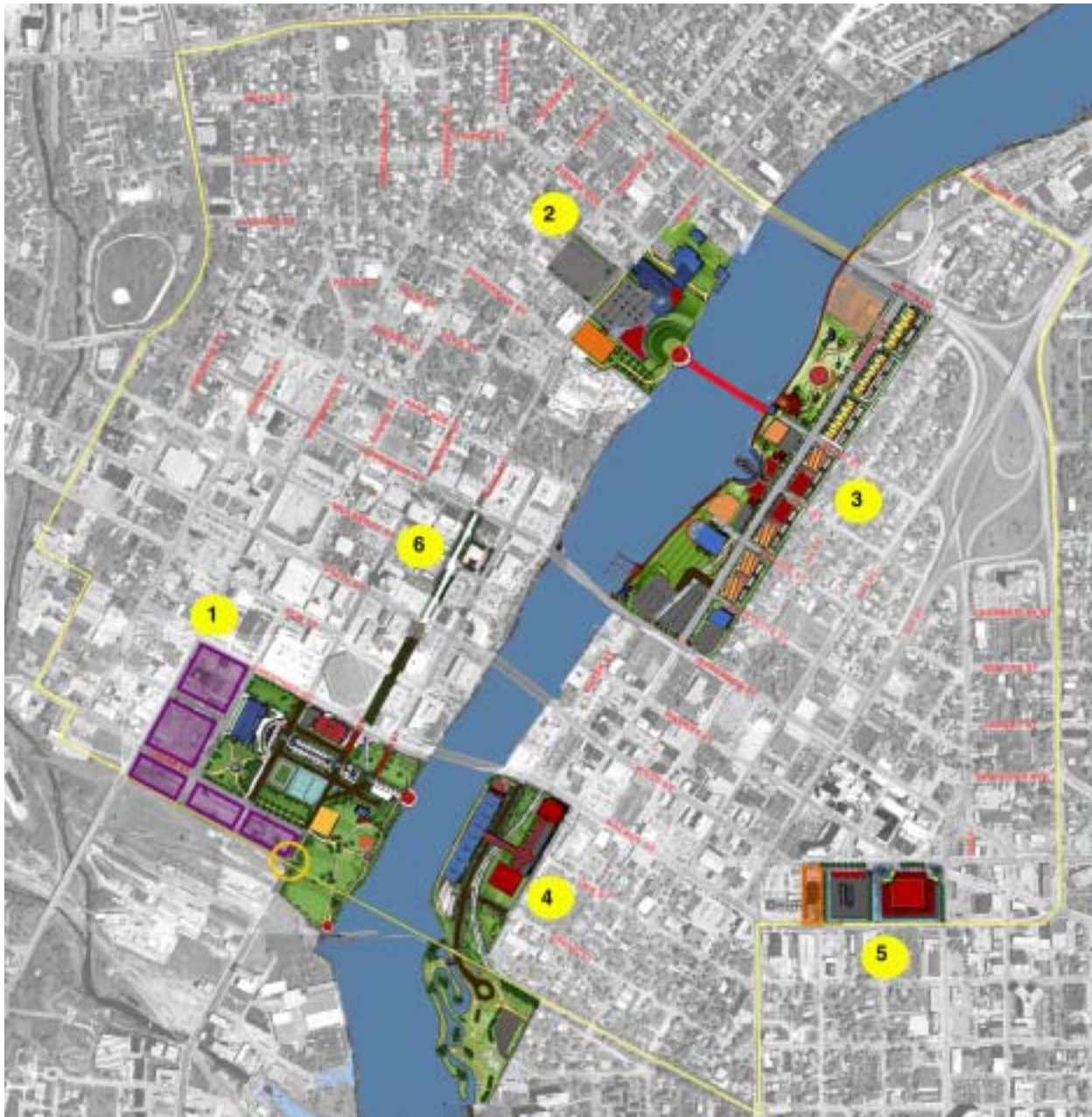


Figure 4: River District Vision Plan

LEGEND

Catalytic Area 1 - Federal Courthouse/Davis Park
 Catalytic Area 2 - Museum Campus
 Catalytic Area 3 - Madison Street

Catalytic Area 4 - Ingersoll/ComEd Site
 Catalytic Area 5 - East Gateway theater
 Catalytic Area 6 - Main Street Mall

The Vision Plan communicates the preferred development approach for the River District Framework Planning Area. This plan is a result of public input, steering committee workshops, site evaluation and a response to market opportunities. The concepts in the Vision Plan are built upon an understanding of the River District's existing physical framework, historic context, subdistrict relationships and sound urban planning principles.

The catalytic projects illustrated in the Vision Plan are anchors that create destination activity centers and help attract additional investment within the River District's subdistricts. These projects help weave together and capitalize on the existing physical and economic fabric of the River District. They also aim to balance the public interests of providing tax base, improving urban character, and providing residents with valued amenities, with the private interests of generating return on investment. Inherent in this concept is creating synergy between the public and private benefits, and thus generating additional momentum for redevelopment and 24-hour activity that builds neighborhoods, connects places, supports jobs, provides an address at which to live, and creates a destination to shop, enjoy cultural pursuits and play.



Festival Plaza



Riverfront Development



Facade Improvements



Outdoor Dining

Catalytic Area 1

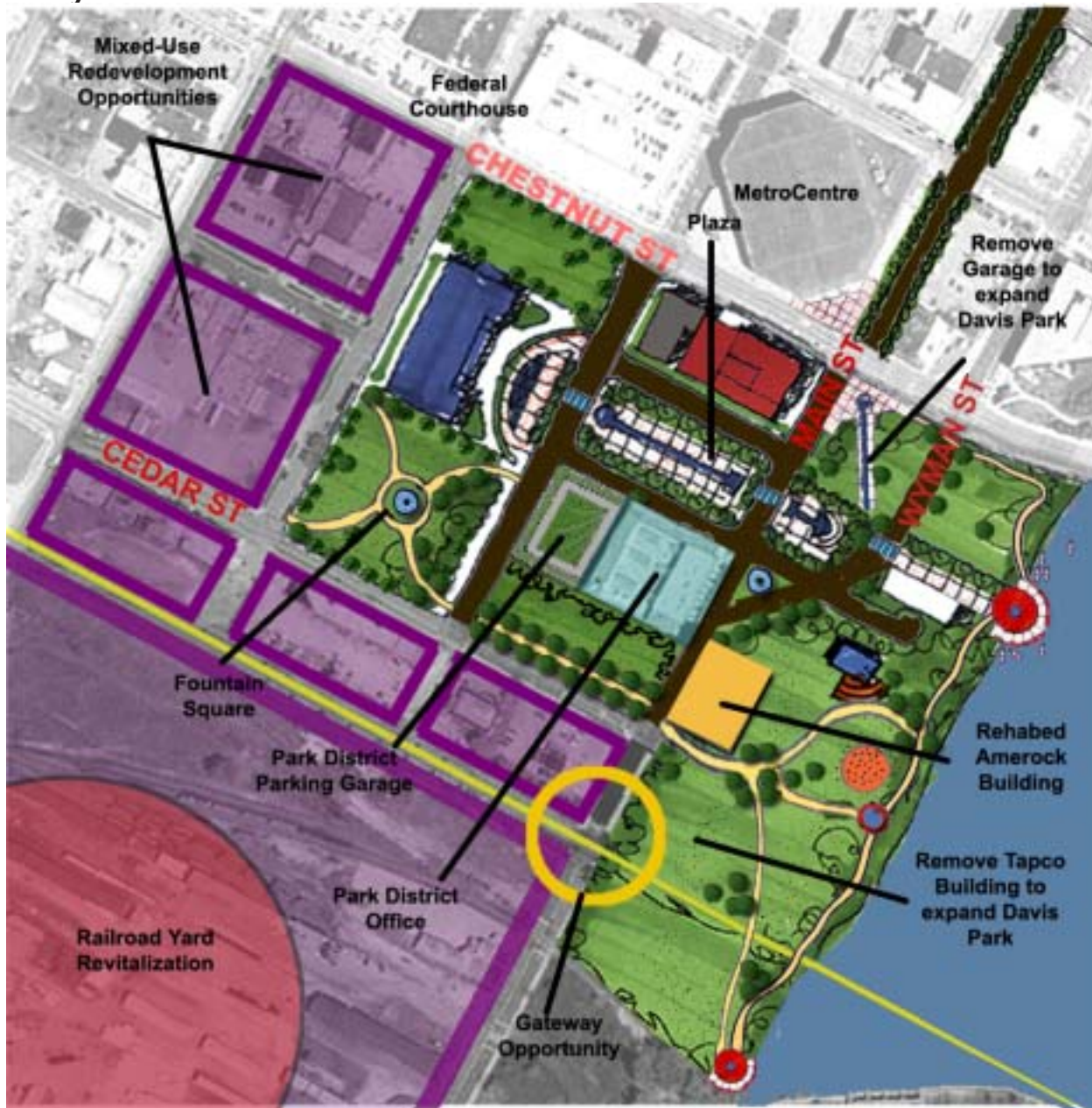


Figure 5: Federal Courthouse/Davis Park

Federal Courthouse/Davis Park

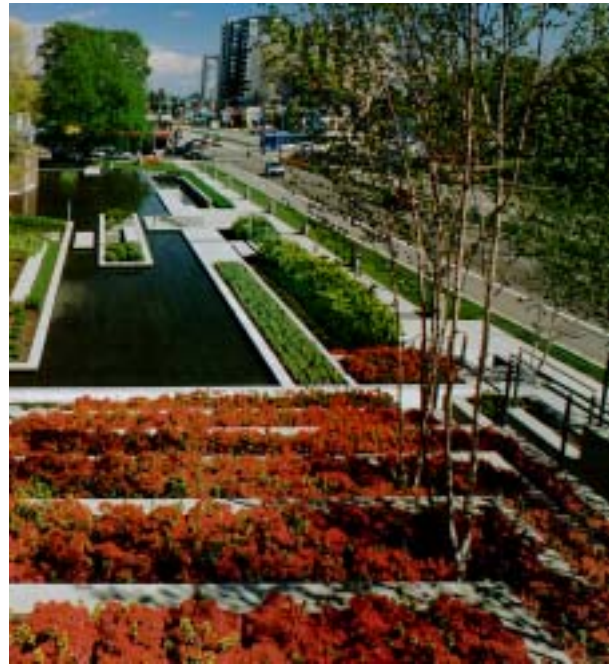
The new federal courthouse represents over a \$40 million investment in the River District. The goal of this catalytic project area is to use this new commitment of dollars to leverage additional improvements and investment in Davis Park and the surrounding area. The result will be an active, vibrant mixed-use gateway at the southeast quadrant of the River District.

Existing Site

The catalytic project area is bounded by Winnebago Street, Chestnut Street, the Union Pacific (UP) Railway and the Rock River. The existing uses include Davis Park, the Rockford Park District facilities in the Old Post Office Building, several restaurants and bars, several commercial and industrial businesses, and several vacant industrial buildings.

Redevelopment Program and Considerations

- Construct new federal courthouse to stimulate additional investment in the district
- Convert Green Street into a linear plaza connecting the courthouse to the riverfront. Include amenities such as water features, artwork, outdoor dining, and event space for street fairs, festivals, etc.
- Create a new fountain square south of the courthouse
- Redevelop the Park District block to create a greenway linkage to the riverfront
- Adaptively reuse the Amerock Building for residential
- Remove the Tapco Building and parking garage at Chestnut and Main to expand Davis Park
- Construct plaza and pedestrian improvements at Chestnut and Main to "invite" MetroCentre visitors
- Improve building facades and outdoor dining facilities for existing restaurants and bars along Main and Chestnut
- Explore opportunities for commuter rail on the UP Railway. Stimulate additional redevelopment of underutilized industrial property with a station location in the district
- Evaluate pedestrian/bicycle opportunities on the UP Railway if commuter rail is not feasible
- Create a gateway at the UP Railway and Main to announce entry into the River District
- Use streetscape improvements to celebrate district identity and unify composite parts
- Redevelop railway yards south of the UP Railway



Plaza with Water Feature



Courthouse Complex



Riverfront

Catalytic Area 2



Figure 6: Museum Campus

Museum Campus

The revitalization strategy for this catalytic project is to create a more campus-like environment for existing/future museum and non-profit organizations. This strategy will result in improved access to the river, sites for new uses that complement the existing mix of tenants and improved grounds and facilities for visitors and employees.

Existing Site

The existing site lies between North Main Street and the Rock River from Dickerman Drive on the south to the area north of Fisher Avenue. The existing uses include the Riverfront Museum Park building, the Burpee Museum of Natural History and the vacant Armory building.

Redevelopment Program and Considerations

- Integrate all uses into a unified, cohesive campus
- Create a new "Jane" exhibit and education building
- Develop new IMAX Theater to complement the existing science cluster
- Construct a new stand-alone building for Rockford Art Museum
- Encourage provocative building designs
- Adaptively reuse the Armory building with use(s) compatible with the campus
- Develop a riverfront restaurant to serve campus visitors and as a destination location for residents
- Incorporate a terraced plaza connecting the campus buildings to the riverfront. Programming can include classroom space, outdoor dining, art, interpretive exhibits, etc.
- Encourage public gathering and boating activities in a new riverfront plaza
- Link the museum campus and redeveloped Madison Street entertainment/recreation district with a new pedestrian bridge over the river
- Continue a riverfront pedestrian and bicyclist pathway system
- Evaluate parking demands and supply. Consider acquisition of properties west of Madison Street for employee and bus parking, if necessary
- Maintain landscape buffer zone between Indian Terrace neighborhood



Art Museum



"Jane" Discovered



Riverfront Museum Park

Catalytic Area 3



Figure 7: Madison Street

Madison Street

The Madison Street catalytic project is a comprehensive approach to reclaiming an underutilized portion of prime riverfront for public access. The goal is to foster the creation of a mixed-use festival park, destination retail/entertainment and boating district in the heart of the River District. This district would be supported with new housing that captures the value of new investment in and public access to the riverfront.

Existing Site

The existing site includes land along the east and west frontages of Madison Street, from the Jefferson Street bridge to the Whitman Street bridge. The eastern frontage is currently occupied by industrial and commercial businesses. The western frontage also includes these types of businesses, as well as several restaurants/ethnic clubs and the Rockford Park District's Riverview Ice House facility.

Redevelopment Program and Considerations

- Redevelop Madison Street into a unique retail/entertainment destination with new riverfront park space
- Design new riverfront festival park with performance spaces, pavilions, fountains, play areas, large event areas, etc.
- Locate destination entertainment and restaurant uses near Hill Street
- Develop new housing along the eastern frontage of Madison. Encourage townhome development compatible in scale and design with the neighborhood to the east. Residential above commercial/office at other locations
- Provide a new marina facility near the entertainment/restaurant cluster. Additional boat docks along length of shoreline
- Retain existing buildings and uses that are consistent with the district's redevelopment strategy. Evaluate the need for building facade and outdoor dining improvements
- Incorporate renovated Riverview Ice House into festival park
- Incorporate parking facilities into new building site planning
- Link Madison Street and the museum campus with a new pedestrian bridge over the river
- Continue the riverfront pedestrian and bicyclist pathway system
- Use streetscape improvements to celebrate unique district identity, unify composite parts and connect surrounding neighborhoods to the riverfront



Bustling Commercial Street



Sinnissippi Tower and Fountain



River Activities



Residential Above First Floor Commercial

Catalytic Area 4



Figure 8: Reuse of the Ingersoll Building for Convention/Exhibition Center

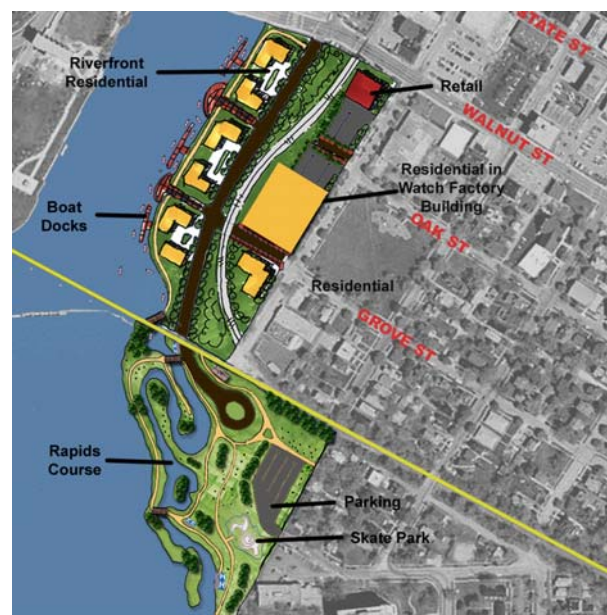


Figure 9: Redevelopment of the site for New Riverfront Residential Community

Ingersoll/ComEd Site

The Ingersoll Building, recently acquired by the City for redevelopment, and ComEd property occupy a commanding location on the east bank of the Rock River. In their current state they preclude access to the riverfront and are contrary to the vision of the River District as a thriving 24-hour neighborhood. This report advances two alternative strategies for catalyzing investment in this and surrounding sectors of the River District. The first is based on reuse of the Ingersoll Building for a convention/exhibition center. The second is based on redevelopment of the site for a new riverfront residential community.

Existing Site

The Ingersoll Building is located on the east riverbank, south of Walnut Street. The ComEd property lies south of the Union Pacific Railway, also along the east riverbank. The catalytic project area extends to the border of the historic Haight Village at Madison Street to include the historic Watch Factory building and the School District building.



Riverfront Residential

Redevelopment Program and Considerations

Convention Center

- Redevelop the Ingersoll Building as an attractive, state-of-the-art exhibition space
- Evaluate relocation of the school district and re-development of their building into a hotel
- Evaluate reuse of the historic Watch Factory building for a conference center
- Construct garage parking with internal connections to the convention center, hotel and conference center. Create a rooftop garden or meeting space on the top of the garage
- Design the Madison Street facade to be compatible with Haight Village
- Accommodate truck and automobile circulation on Water Street away from the neighborhood
- Continue the riverfront pedestrian and bicyclist pathway system
- Evaluate opportunities for pedestrian/bicycle facilities on the UP railway if not used for commuter rail



Convention Center



Hotel



Riverfront Development

Riverfront Residential

- Develop mid-rise structures to create an energetic riverfront community
- Use streetscape improvements to celebrate unique district identity, unify composite parts and connect Haight Village to the riverfront
- Continue the riverfront pedestrian and bicyclist pathway system



Rapids Course

Park

- Redevelop the ComEd property for a new active recreation park
- Evaluate opportunities to construct a white water rapids course and skate park

Catalytic Area 5

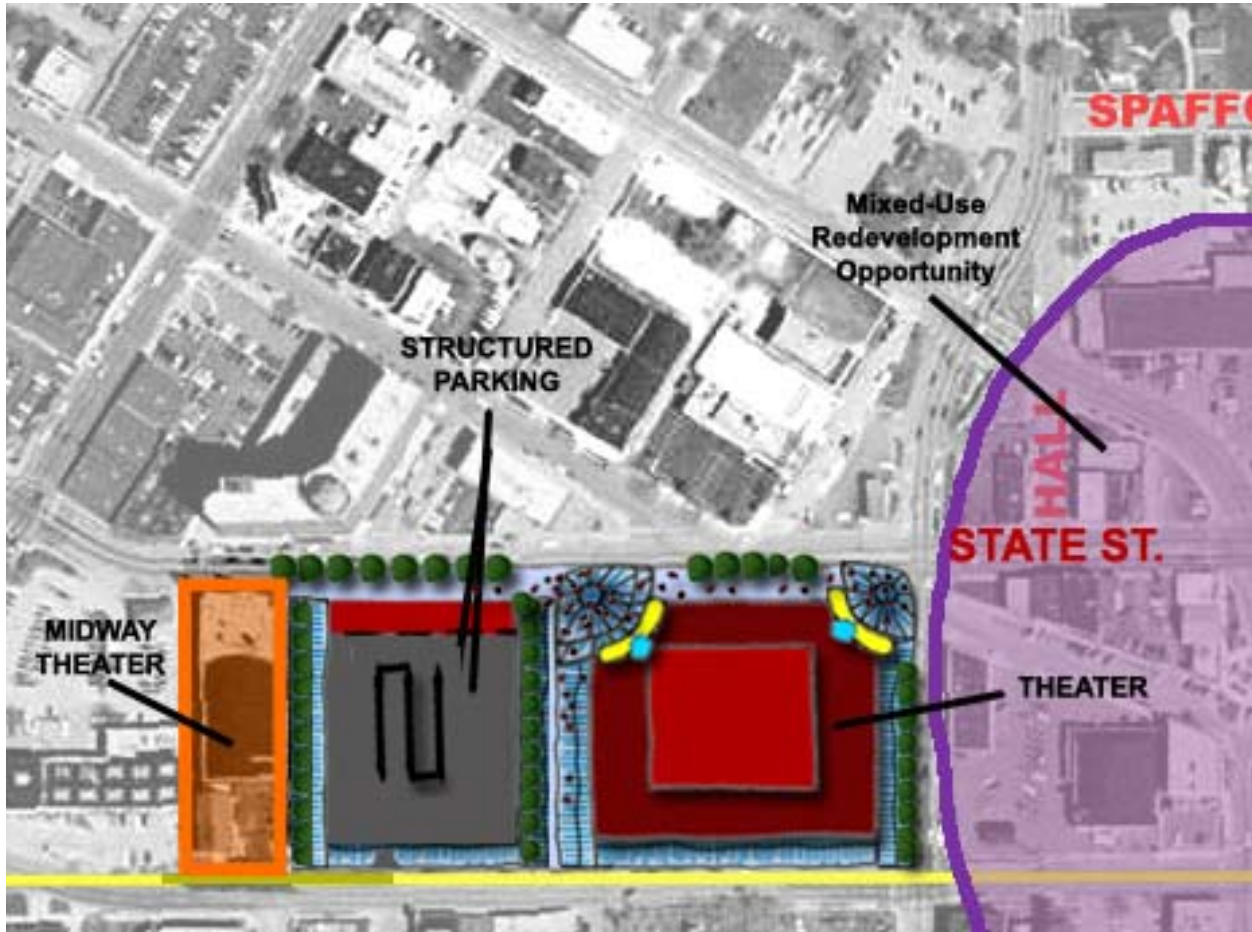


Figure 10: East Gateway Theater

East Gateway Theater

The East Gateway Theater catalytic area seeks to capitalize on the market opportunity for a new state-of-the art motion picture cineplex in the River District. This relatively low-cost form of entertainment would draw from the entire community as well as from the new housing proposed in the River District. It would also encourage additional investment in complementary uses such as restaurants.

Existing Site

The cineplex site includes portions of two blocks bounded by 3rd Street, 6th Street, State Street and 1st Avenue. These blocks include a mixture of small retail, service and office uses. Several single-family homes in deteriorated conditions front on 6th Street. The Inn Town Motel is located adjacent to the Midway Theatre.

Redevelopment Program and Considerations

- Develop new multi-screened cineplex theater by removing underutilized properties and blighting influences
- Anchor the east end of the East State Historic District with a large activity generator
- Develop a new parking garage to be shared with a renovated Midway Theatre and revitalized commercial and residential uses
- Consider vacation of the 5th Street right-of-way between State Street and 1st Avenue to facilitate redevelopment
- Require complementary uses, such as restaurants and retail shops, on the first floor of the theater building and parking garage
- Create an opportunity for private investment in the River District
- Evaluate additional redevelopment opportunities at this gateway to the River District
- Use streetscape improvements to integrate the theater site into the fabric of the existing commercial district



Midway Theatre



Revitalized Commercial



Movie Theater Example

Catalytic Area 6



Figure 11: Main Street Mall

Main Street Mall

The Main Street Pedestrian Mall provides an important public gathering space in the River District. However, it most likely constrains the market potential of adjacent properties and traffic flow in the River District. The goal of this catalytic project is to determine the value of reopening Main Street to vehicle traffic and providing alternative locations for public gathering space.

Existing Site

The mall is located on a closed portion of Main Street between Mulberry and Elm Streets. Prominent civic, cultural and entertainment uses surround the mall, including the Coronado Theatre, Memorial Hall, New American Theater and the Rockford Public Library.

Main Street Mall

Redevelopment Program and Considerations

- Improve conditions on Main Street, whether the pedestrian mall is retained or removed
- Use streetscape improvements on Main Street, as well as Mulberry Street, to create an entertainment/civic district theme
- Integrate the MetroCentre and Coronado Theatre streetscapes, visually linking the whole district



Coronado from Rockford

Renovation of the Mall

- Renovate the existing mall area to create a more flexible people-space
- Create intimate spaces next to the buildings by moving trees and plantings to the sides, allowing for outdoor dining opportunities and up-close retail strolling
- Create a flexible, open space in the center of the mall that can be activated with festivals, farmers markets, performances, and other civic celebrations



Mall

Removal of the Mall

- Evaluate removal of pedestrian mall and reestablishment of two-way traffic patterns on Main Street
- Provide adequate sidewalk space for outdoor dining and streetscape elements such as decorative lighting, seating, landscaping, artwork, etc.
- Redevelop the surface parking lot south of Memorial Hall as a public "town square" plaza. Program this space for festivals, fairs, concerts, outdoor classrooms in association with the Rockford Public Library, etc. and use for parking when not in use

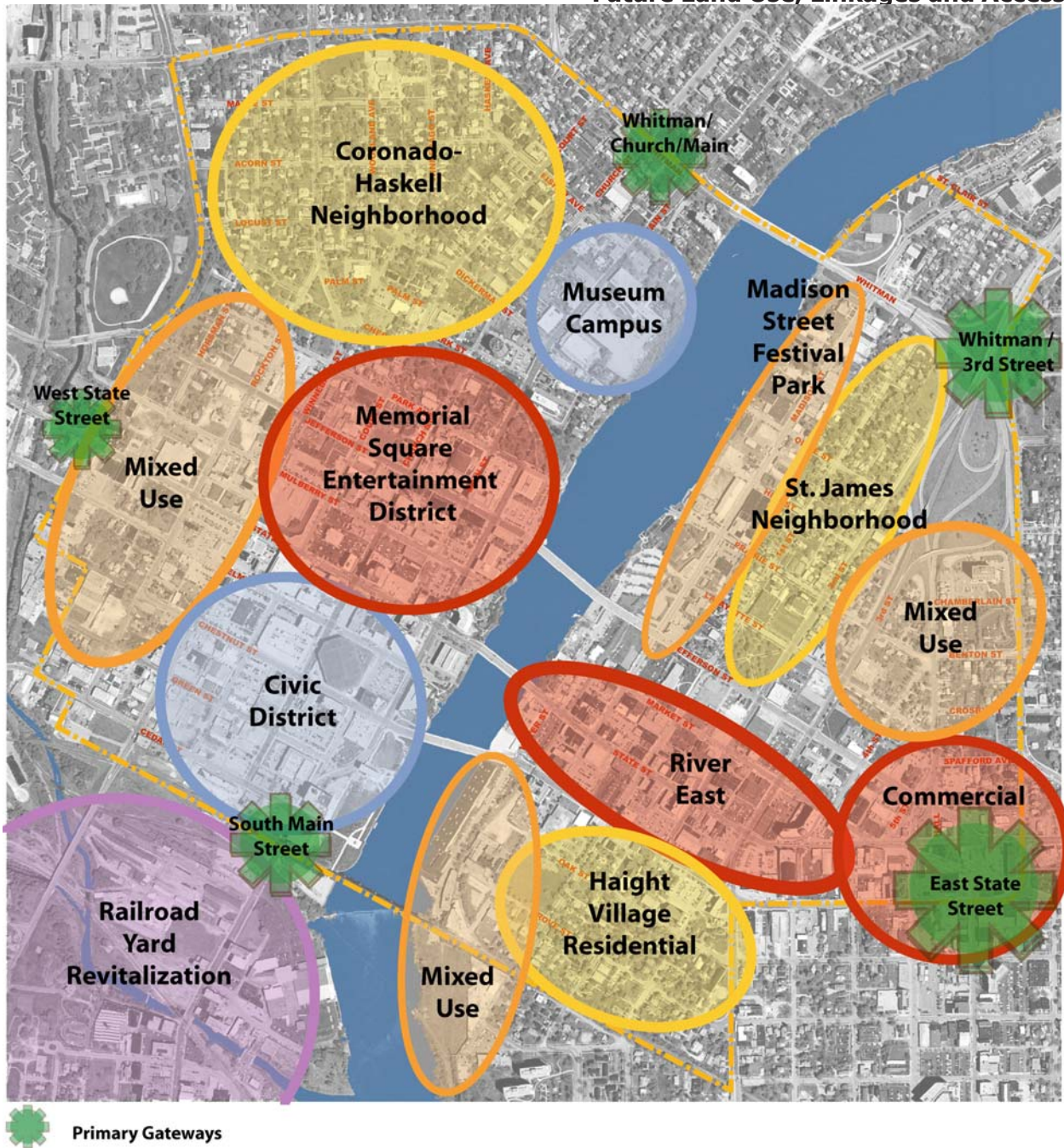


Retail Streetscape



Outdoor Dining

Future Land Use, Linkages and Access



The preceding land use, design and transportation recommendations provide a consensus vision for redevelopment of the River District. Catalytic projects reinforce development themes and character within revitalized subdistricts and gateways (see Figure 12). Each area has a unique set of circumstances, i.e. market conditions, existing building stock, potential funding sources, existing land ownership, etc., that in-

fluence its development. However, the Core Revitalization Principles provide stakeholders with a blueprint for decision making based on a set of values common to all.

Circulation within and to the River District should promote alternative access options and forms of transportation. The Future Roadway and Path Systems Map (Figure 13) indicates the potential

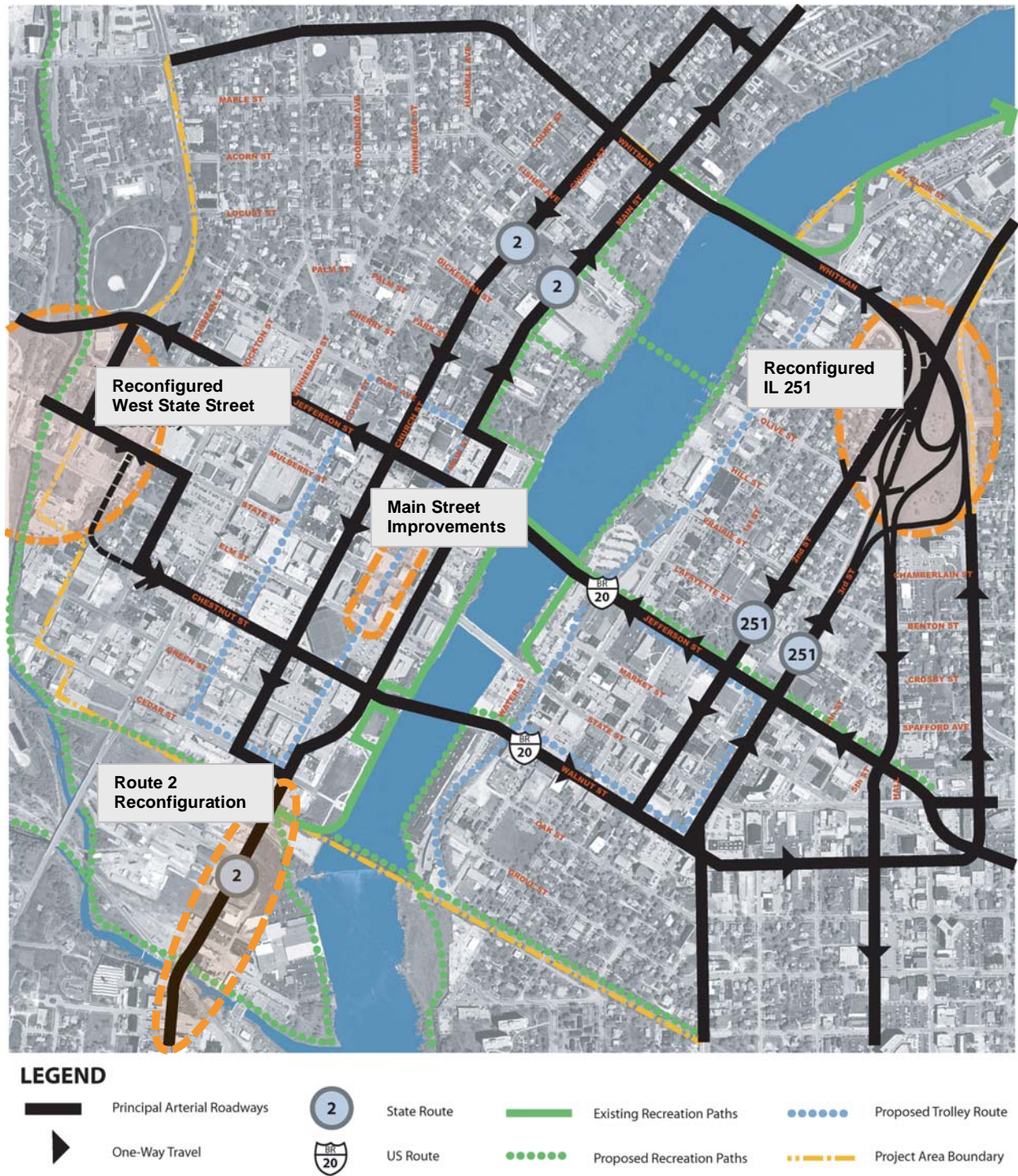
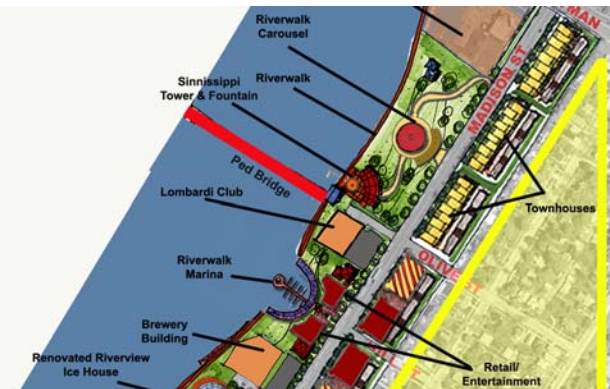
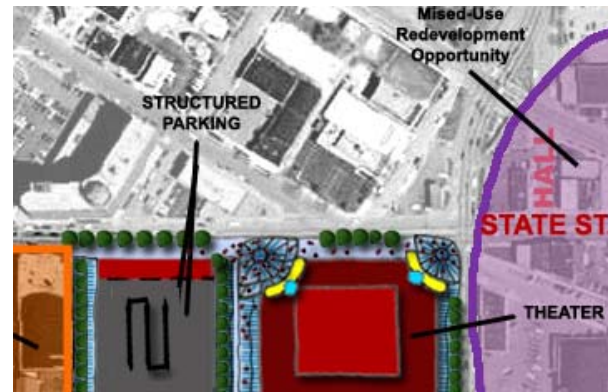


Figure 13: Future Roadway and Path Systems

for improved circulation by creating two-way traffic flows on two state highways that run through the River District (Routes 2 and 251). It also shows how improved pedestrian, bicycle and transit service can improve access between

activity centers in the River District, as well as provide better connections between outlying neighborhoods and the amenities within the District.

Call to Action



The Framework Plan provides the foundation to carry forward an agenda to create a vibrant, exciting River District. Six specific catalytic project areas have been identified, each requiring additional step-by-step planning and mobilization of resources to move from an idea on paper to reality. We have the monumental responsibility to do all that we can to secure the economic future of Rockford by firmly establishing the River District as the heart of the northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin region. What better legacy can we leave future generations than a vital city with a River District filled with the greatest assets our region has to offer?

The most critical phase of any planning process is the shift from concepts to implementation – making the vision real. In the River District today we are in the unique situation where major projects are already underway, and we are working to catch-up to reality. While this set of next steps could be an extensive detailed list, we believe these few actions are most critical to assure the success of the River District.

River District Task Force

We request the River District Board immediately establish a 2-year Task Force to assist in the implementation process of the plan.

The Task Force's principal charge is to ensure the Framework Plan advances as a living, breathing document.

Capacity Building

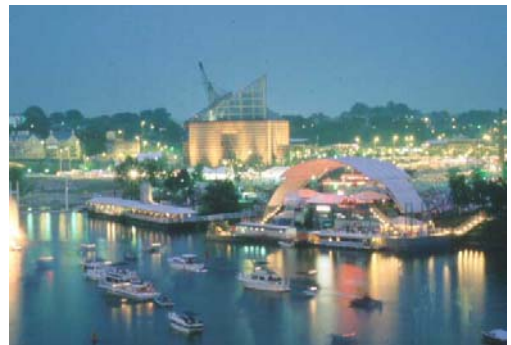
We request the City of Rockford designate a Development Coordinator for the River District, so there is a single point-person within the community whose job it is to make the plan happen.

Marketing and Image

We request the River District take the lead in developing a 2-year marketing campaign to deal with existing image issue, and keep the community informed of all the changes underway in the District.

Planning and Design

We request the City of Rockford and the Park District establish an ad-hoc planning and design team to ensure that projects underway conform with the intent of the Framework Plan.



BACKGROUND

Introduction

Rockford has a long history of planning in the River District (see Figure 14). These past efforts captured the community's vision for a strengthened River District at a particular point in time. Many of the ideas expressed in these planning efforts were realized throughout the years, but conditions were not right for all ideas to be implemented. It is thus with a look to the past for guidance and a look to the future for a new vision that the River District Framework Plan began.



City Hall

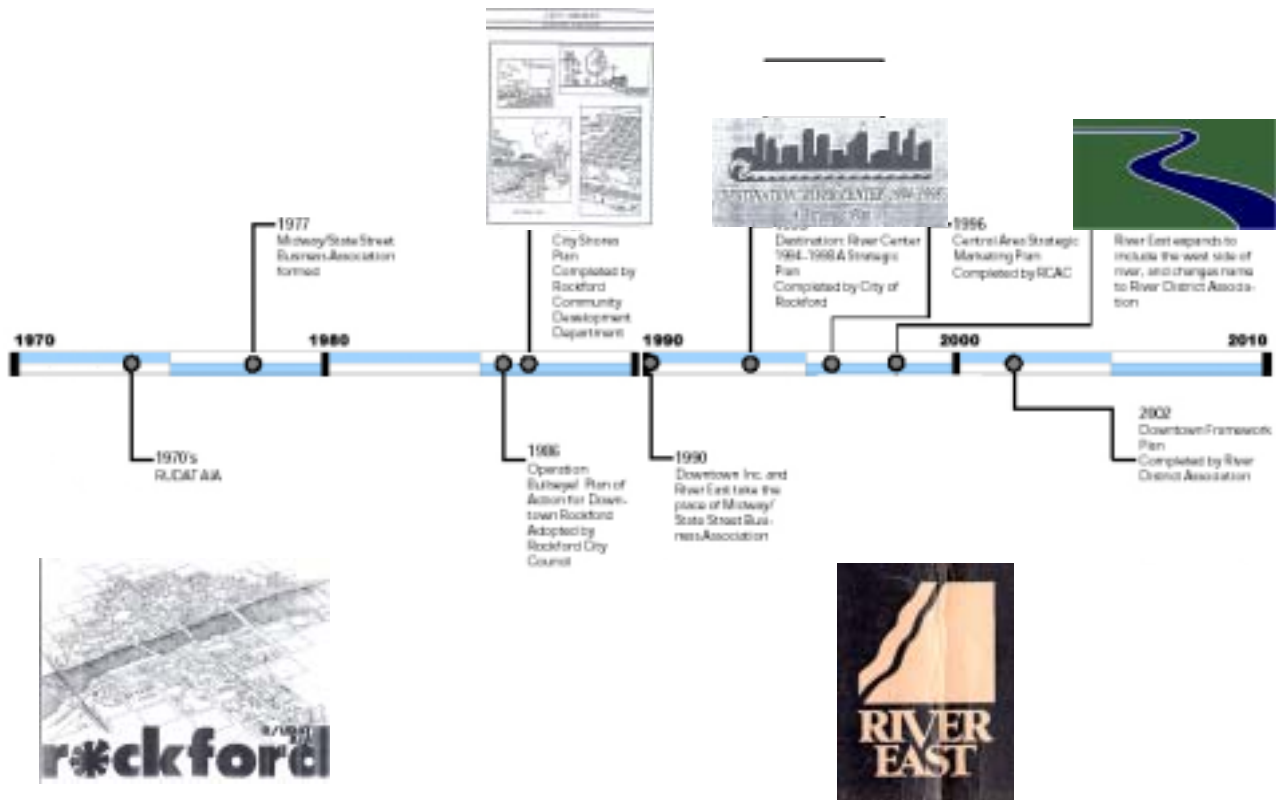


Figure 14: Timeline

Study Area

The River District boundaries are generally defined as Whitman Street and "Y" Boulevard on the north, the Union Pacific Railway and 1st Avenue on the south, Longwood Street on the east and Kilburn Avenue on the west. As the district's name implies, the central physical and symbolic feature in this area is the Rock River.

Project Team

A consultant team headed by the Chicago office of SmithGroup JJR was selected to prepare the River District Framework Plan. Assisting SmithGroup JJR were Real Estate Planning Group and William J. Johannes, Architects. The consultant team worked in close collaboration with a Steering Committee representing the various River District stakeholder interests.



Figure 15: Area Location Map



Figure 16: River District Boundary Map

Project Approach

The objective of the study was to identify opportunities that could be envisioned in a master plan. Figure 17 identifies key steps that were followed in the planning process. These steps included:

Reviewing Existing Plans and Projects

As Figure 14 (Timeline) indicates, the River District has been the subject of many planning efforts over the last 12 years. The team "mined" these plans and projects for salient points that could be incorporated into the Framework Plan.

Community Perceptions and Input

The overall approach integrated extensive stakeholder input and guidance throughout the planning process. Opportunities for stakeholder input included regular Steering Committee meetings, one-on-one interviews with representatives of River District stakeholder interests, two focus group meetings, two Town Hall community meetings and numerous presentations.

Strategic Analysis

Potential development opportunities that would add to a healthy mix of downtown uses and attract additional investment were identified and analyzed using the information and insights gained from the previous steps and extensive review of existing land use and transportation conditions.

Development Analogs

Development analogs produced economic and market comparisons between Rockford and other communities with the types of land uses desired. These comparisons provided a reality check for the likelihood of attracting investment.

Catalytic Projects

Based on the foregoing, priority development projects were recommended that, based on their size, scale, use and design, would provide an



Steering Committee Meeting



Town Hall Meeting

immediate and lasting positive impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Each of the catalytic areas is also seen to have the ability to attract further public and private investment in the neighborhood.

Framework Plan

The Framework Plan is a consensus plan that synthesizes the results of the planning analysis and represents the interests of the varied stakeholders in the River District.



Public Meeting



Figure 17: Project Approach



Coronado Theatre



Davis Park



Retail Development/Historic Preservation

Existing Land Use

The existing physical state of the River District was studied to determine site specific opportunities and constraints for development. The following section describes the area's context within the urban fabric of Rockford, including identification of area subdistricts and transportation infrastructure.

The River District includes the central business district or downtown of Rockford. Spanning both sides of the Rock River, the area includes major concentrations of government, office, retail/service businesses and entertainment uses, characteristic of traditional downtowns. The River District boundaries, however, extend beyond the limits where traditional downtown uses are located. Within these extended areas are several large, established residential neighborhoods with many historically and architecturally significant buildings. Also included in this area, on the west side of the Rock River, is an industrial area.

Project Subdistricts

To better understand the River District, the study area has been subdivided into 10 subdistricts with unique identifying characteristics. (See Figure 1). The following sections describe the existing conditions and key planning use issues within each subdistrict.

Madison Street

Predominant uses in this corridor reflect the subdistrict's history in commerce and industry. Several larger industrial users, such as Cellusuede Products and Majestic Fasteners, and several smaller firms and companies are still located here, but the overall area is transitioning away from these types of businesses. Several prominent recreational and/or entertainment uses include the Rockford Park District's Riverview Ice House, the converted Brewery Building and marina, Lombardi Club and Verdi Club. Of particular importance



Madison Street

is that properties along the western frontage of Madison Street extend to the shoreline of the Rock River and properties along the eastern frontage back up to a residential neighborhood.



The Brewery Building

St. James Neighborhood

The St. James Neighborhood subdistrict is predominantly a single-family residential neighborhood. Other prominent uses include St. James School and Church, Trinity Lutheran Church and a new community center. Given their size and one-way traffic flows, 2nd and 3rd Streets (IL 251) act as physical barriers that conflict with the cohesive nature of this neighborhood. Despite its proximity, this neighborhood is cut off from the riverfront by land uses on Madison Street.



Existing Housing Stock

East State Historic District

River East is one of the River District's traditional commercial districts. Centered on State Street, River East has a collection of buildings from the late 1800s and early 1900s that have been rehabilitated for new businesses, restaurants, civic organizations, etc. Other prominent uses include Rockford City Hall, Rockford Register Star offices and plant, and Midway Theatre.



City Hall



Rockford Register Star



Commercial Buildings

Coronado-Haskell Neighborhood

The Coronado-Haskell Neighborhood consists of a mixture of single and multi-family dwellings in decline and disrepair. More efforts are needed to eliminate blight and attract development to this topographically unique area.

Haight Village

Haight Village is a historic residential neighborhood south of River East. Investors and residents have been rediscovering this neighborhood for its architecturally significant building stock and easy access to cultural, entertainment and employment activities. Despite its proximity, the riverfront is not accessible to this neighborhood.



Existing Housing Stock

Riverfront Museum Park and Burpee Museum of Natural History

Museum/entertainment opportunities in this cultural cluster include Discovery Center Museum, Rockford Art Museum, Rockford Film Project/Storefront Cinema and the Burpee Museum of Natural History. Several issues that have been identified in this area include new or improved Art Museum facilities, improving access to the Rock River, redevelopment of the adjacent Armory Building and opportunities to add complementary uses to the existing mix.



Riverfront Museum Park

Main Street Mall

The Main Street Mall area is the River District's second traditional commercial district. Prominent civic, cultural and entertainment uses in-

clude: the Coronado Theatre, Memorial Hall, New American Theater and the Rockford Public Library. Main Street is a pedestrian Mall between Elm and Mulberry Street. While the Mall does provide important gathering space downtown, it also constrains the market potential of adjacent properties and traffic flow.



Main Street Mall



Memorial Hall and Public Parking

West Industrial/Mixed-Use

The West Industrial subdistrict extends from approximately Winnebago Street to the western limits of the River District. Although this area retains some vestiges of its former manufacturing/commercial base, this area is viewed for its redevelopment potential and opportunities to strengthen and support the River District.

Riverfront Esplanade

The Riverfront Esplanade is a path system along the west bank of the Rock River from Chestnut Street to Park Avenue. Uses lining this pathway include prominent government, office and residential buildings. Some concern has been voiced regarding the ability of this system to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as its level of amenities.



Esplanade

MetroCentre/Davis Park

The MetroCentre/Davis Park subdistrict is anchored by these two namesake uses. Both rate near the top of Rockford's site and/or event attendance rankings. The Rockford Park District offices in the Old Post Office building are nearby. The new Federal Courthouse is planned for the area immediately west of this subdistrict.



MetroCentre



Main Street

County Courthouse

The county courthouse subdistrict also includes the Winnebago County Justice Center, government offices and parking structure, as well as the existing federal courthouse and offices for attorneys.



Winnebago County Buildings

Linkages and Access

Automobile

There are many vehicular access issues influencing future revitalization of the River District. The first access issue has land use implications and a community-wide scale outside of the scope of the Framework Plan, namely that the River District is located approximately six miles west of Interstate 90. A majority of Rockford's shopping, hotel and other commercial businesses moved or located near this transportation corridor. Residential and institutional development also moved east and/or north away from the River District to benefit from improved accessibility and available land. There is consensus in Rockford that community and regional access to the River District must be improved to attract the investment and visitors envisioned in the Framework Plan. Improving Main Street (IL 2) from US 20 to the River District is one initiative currently being implemented.

Once in the River District, primary vehicular access is provided by the network of principal arterial roadways.

As indicated in Figure 19, most of these arterials have one-way traffic flows.

While these facilities move traffic through the area faster, this may not be the desired affect, especially when adjacent to retail and service businesses and residential neighborhoods.

Many plan participants also identified the difficulties of circulating within the River District, especially for visitors to one of the area's attractions, caused by the numerous one-way roadways. The Main Street Pedestrian Mall was also identified as a constraint to circulation.

Lastly, as in most downtown areas, parking within the River District has own set of issues. Figure 18 shows the locations of existing municipal parking structures and surface lots. A key issue identified through the planning process is the relatively high percentage of parking spaces that are reserved and unavailable for visitors to the River District.



Figure 18: Municipal Parking Map



Figure 19: Existing Roadways and Path

Pedestrian/Bicycle

Cities with attractive and inviting downtowns typically provide a variety of transportation alternatives to the automobile. A critical issue concerning pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and circulation is the discontinuity in the riverfront pathway system. Plan participants identified the need to create a continuous riverfront pathway for pedestrians and bicyclists and extend this type of facility into the surrounding subdistricts and neighborhoods.



Pedestrian Connection



Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway



Museum Campus, Chicago



Pedestrian Pathway



Pedestrian Pathway

Transit Service

The Rockford Mass Transit District provides bus service within the River District and greater Rockford area. A downtown trolley (soft-wheel) has also been used in the past to connect the hotels/shopping on the east side of Rockford with cultural/entertainment uses in the River District.



Transit Center

Market Assessment

The purpose of this initiative is to provide stakeholders with land reuse strategies and redevelopment recommendations that are responsive to market conditions while respecting the community's vision for increased development in downtown Rockford. The geographic focus of this initiative spans both sides of the Rock River within the River District area. An important element of this effort is the stakeholders' passion to reclaim the waterfront and transition underutilized properties into productive uses that will benefit the immediate area and the entire city, as well as create a regional "draw".

Much has already been said in this report regarding Rockford's position as a regional center for entertainment, cultural and civic activities. There have been recent improvements in each of these sectors, such as the renovation of the Coronado Theatre and plans for the new federal courthouse. As part of the planning process, the city, the River District Association, and other stakeholders also wanted to explore the market opportunities for attracting additional investment in the River District to strengthen its position as a regional center. Specifically, Real Estate Planning Group evaluated the following types of development: hotel/convention center, new housing, a supermarket and theaters (megaplex general cinema and IMAX).

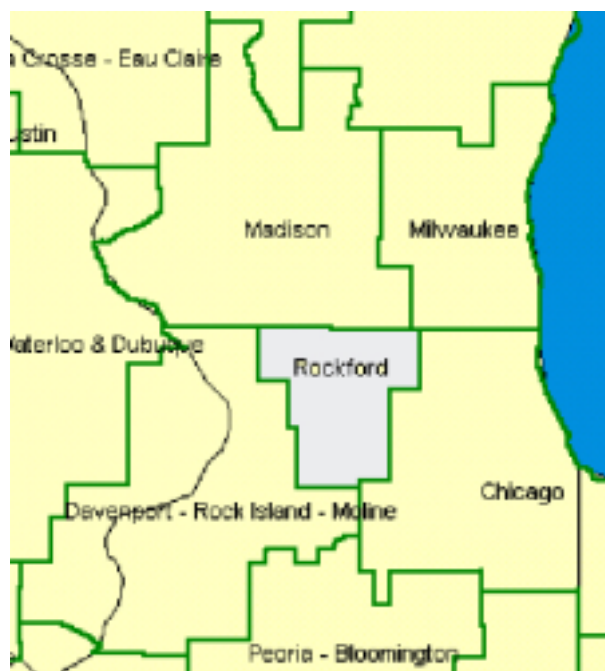
Methodology

The market evaluation undertaken by Real Estate Planning Group used a technique of analysis called "development analogs". This technique allows comparisons between market conditions in Rockford and other cities that have the type of development under consideration in the River District. For instance, developers of specialty supermarkets consider the population, number of households, aggregate income and household income within a five-minute drive of a potential store location to determine if there is a market opportunity there. This data, in addition to competing store

locations, was gathered and analyzed for other cities and compared to similar data for Rockford to determine if a River District location would be attractive for a specialty supermarket. Similar comparisons or analogs were conducted using criteria important to locating hotel/convention centers, housing and theater complexes.

Market Overview

Prior to discussing the market opportunities in strategic sectors, it is important to establish some context for the size of the Rockford market. There are many methods for defining a market and its potential drawing power. The method used for this study was based on the concept of "Designated Market Area" or DMA. DMA's are the geographic areas that define the boundaries of a commercial television station's advertising reach. Rockford's DMA is relatively small in terms of geographic reach and purchasing power. Out of 210 DMA's in the US, Rockford ranks as 132nd. To give the reader some context, the top 100 DMA's cover 85% of the US population. On a local level, the Rockford DMA is small compared to surrounding communities (see DMA Map)



DMA Map

DMA	National Ranking
Champaign-Springfield/Decatur, IL	82
Madison, WI	85
Davenport-Rock Island-Moline, IL	92
Peoria-Bloomington, IL	116
LaCrosse-Eau Claire, WI	127
Rockford, IL	132

Figure 20: Designated Market Area Rankings

There are 462,288 residents within the Rockford DMA and the average household income is \$56,665 (2002 estimate). While this is a reasonable measure of the regional trade area, interviews with representatives of the Coronado Theatre and Convention and Visitors Bureau revealed that the market for certain activities in Rockford attracts people from even further distances, particularly from the Beloit and Janesville areas of Wisconsin.



Aerial View

On a local level, there are an estimated 71,134 residents within a five-minute drive time of the State Street and Main Street intersection. Five minutes is a standard commonly used to estimate the average time people are willing to travel for certain types of goods and services.

Retailers often evaluate the spending power of residents and large employee bases within this travel zone when making facility location decisions. Within this drive time from State/Main, the average household income (\$41,676) is substantially less than the DMA as a whole.

Hotel/Convention Center

Existing hotel space within Rockford is concentrated near the Interstate 90 interchange with E. State Street, some six miles east of the River District. As part of its economic development/tourism strategy, the City of Rockford has identified an interest in attracting a major hotel development in the River District. In addition, there is also an interest in pairing a new hotel with a convention center.

Research into industry trends and analog comparisons of hotel/convention facilities in other cities reveals several key factors that influence the viability of convention space:

- The number of hotel rooms in proximity
- Access to convenient and frequent air service
- DMA population that can support the convention activities

Based on these three criteria, the River District's market position for a convention center is weak, because there are almost no other quality hotel rooms nearby, the Greater Rockford Airport presently serves only freight traffic, and the DMA's population is comparatively small. This being said, many similarly challenged communities have chosen to construct convention centers because of community pride and the more tangible economic benefits derived from even limited convention traffic. If this type of development is pursued in the River District, it is recommended that the hotel be large

enough (160-250 rooms) to accommodate relatively large regional events since it would be the only facility within proximity. The convention center should have a minimum of 60,000 square feet of exhibit space to be competitive with other Illinois and Wisconsin event facilities.

Housing

Consistent with national trends, Rockford has prioritized the need to attract a critical mass of residents to the River District as part of its revitalization strategy. Several developers have recently converted commercial spaces into residential units, but their relatively small scale has not been enough to trigger substantial investment in additional new housing. Overcoming perceived and real safety issues and providing neighborhood amenities are both issues that must be addressed. However, buyer confidence in the River District as a housing location will be built slowly.

New developments should be small in scale, approximately 50 or fewer units, until additional market momentum has been established. Peoria and Rock Island are two examples where this type of housing strategy has been successful. Stakeholder interviews indicate a demand for new types of housing that currently are not available in the market. Condominiums, loft conversions and townhomes have all been identified as desirable housing products.

Another key constraint to constructing new, middle- to higher-end housing is the relative inexpensiveness of the overall housing market. A recent Multiple Listing Service search revealed the most expensive custom home was selling for \$350,000 and the median sale price was \$99,000. Low sale price potential and construction costs only slightly below or equal to those in more expensive markets have limited the



William Brown Building

Supermarket

As mentioned above, providing quality neighborhood amenities will be important to change perceptions of the River District as a residential neighborhood. Close, easy access to a supermarket is a basic amenity most people consider essential to a quality living environment. More and more communities are encouraging new supermarkets in their downtowns to complement housing. The River District is served by six supermarkets within a five-minute drive. Given this level of competition and shopper choice, it is unlikely that another large commercial grocery store would be attracted to the River District.



Supermarket Location and Drive Times

Based on their current locational criteria, it might also prove difficult to encourage a new specialty or organic food store, such as Trader Joe's or Whole Foods, to locate in the River District. Although these stores would likely be attractive to the young professionals and older couples without children in the home, the overall population and/or household income levels within a five minute drive from the River District are lower than typically found in proximity to these types of stores.

An opportunity to cater to the types of households attracted to the River District may reside in the existing 320 specialty grocery store on Court Street. Improvements to the building exterior, parking area and store's interior could be done to make the store more attractive. It would also be important to stock the types of products that would be attractive to those walking home from work in the River District.

Entertainment

Developing the River District as a major entertainment center will be the key driving force behind making the River District a more desirable place to live and visit. Already in the plans is the development of an IMAX Theater that will be part of the Museum Campus complex, and that will provide the River District as well as the Museum Campus a distinct venue that in other cities has shown to be a draw.

In addition to the IMAX Theater, the River District appears to be able to support a megaplex theater that would show first run films in the latest theater venue, stadium seating. Currently Rockford appears to be underscreened, having only one screen per 11,000 people compared with one screen for 7,857 people throughout the U.S.

Depending upon how the film zones would be defined in Rockford, a movie theater in the River District would not have any competition within a three-mile ring and it would have a supporting population of 71,134. Within a five-mile film zone of the River District, Rockford has a

population of 164,544 people and two theaters with ten screens. The Rockford DMA has only one theater with 16 screens that meets today's viewing requirements, and that theater is seven miles away and is east of Interstate 90.

In addition to a recommended megaplex theater in the River District, nearby restaurants and other entertainment offerings are very important to create an entertainment atmosphere.



Movie Theater Film Zones



Movie Theater

Stakeholder Interview Summary

The planning process included an extensive public participation component. Part of this strategy was to interview community leaders representing a broad range of stakeholder interests in the River District for their views on potential revitalization strategies and development opportunities and constraints. The following list identifies all those interviewed for the Framework Plan. What follows is a summary of key points that were made during the interviews.

Interview Participants

Chandler Anderson, Bacchus Restaurant
 John Anderson
 Bill Bittner, City of Rockford
 Tara Blazer, Fine Arts Museum
 Roland "Chip" Chapdelaine, Rock Valley College
 Sandy Kohn, Medicine Man
 Kris Cohn, Winnebago County
 John Cook, John R. Cook Associates
 John Holmstrom, William Charles Ltd.
 Fritz Jacobi, Rockford Register Star
 Chris Lehman, WNIJ Radio
 Bob Levin, Council of 100
 Doug Mark, 3rd Ward Alderman
 Larry Morrissey, Morrissey Law Offices
 Webbs Norman, Rockford Park District
 Wendy Perks Fisher, Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
 Ryan Petty, Rockford Chamber of Commerce
 John Phelps, Rockford Local Development Corporation
 Sunil Puri, First Rockford Group
 Jim Ryan, City of Rockford
 Frank Schier, Rock River Times
 Doug Scott, City of Rockford
 Rick Strader, Rockford Park District
 Tom Walsh, Associated Bank
 Sarah Wolf, Discovery Center Museum

General Perceptions

- The River District relies heavily on visitors from outlying areas of Rockford and the greater region to support its activities.
- The success of Rockford is dependent on the success of the River District.
- Collaborations between organizations and the City of Rockford are extremely impor-

tant to the future success of the River District. One goal of these collaborations should be to break down the barriers, perceived and real, that separate the east and west sides of Rockford.

- Access to the River, including but not limited to boating, should be a primary goal.
- There is pervasive and long-standing skepticism in Rockford about the ability to revitalize the River District.
- There is a perception that Rockford loses its talented young adults who decide to relocate in other communities.
- It is difficult to get private entrepreneurs to assume the risk of developing in the River District.
- There is private market financing available for development projects. Most will require some partnering with the public sector.
- There are perceptions of safety issues in the River District that are unfounded.

Residential Market

- The Rockford housing market is extremely affordable. There is no premium for rental space.
- Because there are few constraints to build new housing anywhere in town, there is little incentive to build in the River District.
- However, there is a view that there is a market opportunity for new housing along the river, possibly condominiums. There is also an opportunity to provide housing attractive to young professionals seeking an urban environment and unique dwelling units.
- Recommend incremental housing development rather than one or two large projects.

- There is little public sector financial assistance to construct housing. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is good when it can be used.
- Better retail, especially grocery, is needed to support new residential.

Commercial/Office Market

- The ability to attract a hotel to the River District is dependent on the ability to simultaneously provide new/improved convention and meeting space.
- Any convention center or hotel developed in the River District will have to be a one-of-a-kind destination building to compete with other cities.
- The River District lacks a critical mass of retail activity. There is a need for more market rate housing in the River District and surrounding neighborhoods to attract additional commercial and entertainment uses.
- There is a need and opportunity for low-cost entertainment in the River District, such as a movie theater.
- There is an opportunity for restaurants that capitalize on riverfront views and amenities.
- Expanding Rockford's capacity to accommodate amateur sports events/activities should be encouraged (i.e. semi-pro teams, sports medicine facilities, tournament organizing and facilities, etc.).
- The west side is attractive as a location for professional service firms (architects, designers, etc.).
- The River District should be promoted as a center of creativity. Artists should be encouraged to live and work there.
- The River District should be improved and promoted as a "wired" area, which would attract the types of high-tech businesses and employees that would be interested in the River District.
- Reuse opportunities include the Conseco building and the Elks Club building.
- The Faust Hotel seniors building should be considered for redevelopment as a commercial hotel.
- The office market is less likely to stimulate

reinvestment in the River District than the residential market.

Institutions

- The completion of Davis Park should be a priority for the River District. Improvements should accommodate more year-round programming.
- Opportunities to improve the museum campus include retaining the Rockford Art Museum, the addition of an IMAX theater and a family-oriented restaurant. Improved access to the river for boaters and pedestrians is also viewed as an opportunity.
- Better use of the Armory Building site would be parking or open space.
- Convenient, free parking is essential to the success of the museum campus.

Other Development Opportunities

- There is a need for improved pedestrian/bicycle connections between neighborhoods and the River District.
- The Main Street mall should be programmed for year-round use and activities.
- Opportunities for utilizing the Rock River for hydroelectric power should be investigated.
- Boating facilities, both motorized and non-motorized, should be greatly expanded.
- Rooftop gardens should be encouraged.
- Redevelopment of the River District should include opportunities for celebrating Rockford's heritage, including its furniture making history.
- Revitalization should include consideration of adaptive reuse of existing buildings of historical and architectural significance. Character buildings are a key asset that distinguishes the River District.

City Policies/Actions

- Actions the City can take to increase investment in the River District include: hiring a community development director (River District coordinator), revising city codes and

- The City's landscape ordinance is good, but better enforcement is needed for all public and private sector projects.
- The City should strengthen and strictly administer its code enforcement policies with the River District to deal with problem buildings before they become dilapidated.
- Retail should be required on the ground floors of buildings at key activity nodes. The City should review the zoning code to encourage and permit mixed-use buildings.

Transportation

- Jefferson and Chestnut Streets are not well designed for a downtown setting. Their ability to handle large volumes of traffic and high speeds encourages people to leave the River District.
- There is a need to improve East State Street from I-90 to the River District to be a more convenient entry into the downtown area.
- The high number of one-way streets in the River District and the Main Street Mall make circulation difficult and confusing for visitors.
- Improved access and wayfinding are essential if Rockford is to maintain its status as the regional center.
- The viability of water taxis should be investigated.
- Bike racks are needed to improve accessibility to the River District.

Parking

- There is an oversupply of permit parking and an undersupply of visitor parking in the River District.
- There is an insufficient supply of public parking when more than one event is occurring.
- Opportunities for the shared use of church parking in the River District should be explored.

Existing/Previous Studies

- Rockford Central Commission (feasibility study): 12 images/ projects
- City Shores Riverfront Plan
- R/UDAT AIA Rockford
- Downtown Rockford Market Rate Housing Study
- Central Area Strategic Marketing Plan
- Downtown Rockford Design Guidelines
- 2020 Comprehensive Plan (draft)

Rockford River District Framework Plan - Survey Results

Involvement with the River District

Work 30
Shop 21
Live 17
Play 23
Culture 29
Invest 16

Other

- Eat
- Café owner
- Own house, business, and rental loft
- Octane, Coronado
- Restaurant owner
- Ricotta's automotive, business and 2 warehouses
- Owner- American Financial/Security Inc., B&B
- Board member of several organizations
- River District board member, Realtor
- Steering committee, framework plan Haight Village

Biggest Opportunities

- Cultural attractions (3)
- Restaurants (7)
- It's great, it's special, everyone needs to know
- Unlimited



- Exposing the beauty of the river along Madison and south of state street bridge (2)
- Cultural events / entertainment (3)
- Wonderful community atmosphere
- Riverfront development (6)
- Adaptive reuse
- Momentum
- History of area (2)
- Victorian homes
- Promote existing business (2)
- Recreation
- River - river park, fountain (8)
- Architecture (4)
- Coronado, arts center, galleries (1)
- Tourism
- Retail
- Festivals
- Affordable property
- River activities (3)
- Entertainment/nightlife (3)
- Hotels
- Downtown Residences (3)
- Reroute roads
- I-90 advertising
- Use local people
- River front industrial
- Lofts (2)
- Regional marketing and promotion
- Pedestrian paths
- Trolley
- Expand museum campus
- Traffic/parking
- Upscale hotels
- Convention center (2)
- Committed river district organization
- 2nd story housing (mkt. rate)
- Retail (2)
- Vacant storefront for new businesses
- Keep streets clean (2)
- Move people downtown who care about area
- Downtown owners residences
- Bike path
- Curbside appeal
- Improve the aesthetics
- Advertise in motel/hotels, TV, radio (3)
- Mixed use housing
- On street parking
- Plant 1000 trees in the Whitman street interchange
- Inclusion, positive imaging
- Networking
- Education
- Docks on river, more things to do
- Family activities downtown (Carousel in Marshfield, OH)
- Define gateways and boundaries
- Begin riverwork
- Framework
- IMAX
- Better promotion of office space
- Improve security
- Bike paths
- Beautification (2)
- Building standards
- Fill empty buildings

Short-term opportunities

- Market to Chicago and Madison (2)
- Market what we have so we can stay (3)
- Develop existing properties especially historic structures into mixed use.
- Residential development (3)
- Small business development (3)
- More events
- Apartments
- Dining (2)

Biggest Obstacles

- Perception (11)
- Ourselves
- Moving ahead regardless of negative rhetoric financing
- Negative perception/image (7)
- Lack of parking (8)
- Existing lt. Industrial
- Parking and security
- Traffic pattern
- Marketing (4)
- Access
- 5 miles and 29 stoplights from hotels
- Crime, drugs/safety (5)
- Strip bars and their clientele
- Street patterns
- Cave man thinking

- Lack of positives
 - Follow through on ideas
 - Investors
 - Getting people downtown
 - Negative populous
 - Public perception and their resistance to participate in downtown
 - Government support
 - History
 - City zoning (2)
 - Transportation
 - General appearance
 - Older structures and cost to improve
 - Students, youth
 - The mall
 - IDOT - transportation issues
 - Small thinkers that don't support risk takers
 - Ignorance and fear
 - Attitude
 - Vacant property
 - Codes for rehab
 - Excessive concentration of social services
 - Public subsidy for downtown hotel
- to go
 - (La Clede's landing in St. Louis and Warehouse District in downtown Omaha)
 - Loft and condo housing
 - Interest and fun
 - Develop river (2)
 - Education facility to bring more and constant traffic
 - Use the river

Top Priority

- Marketing what we already have (6)
- PR firm to represent downtown (2)
- Parking and cleanup
- Developing interconnecting bike/ped paths n,s,e,w; coordinate this with Morgan street bridge and roadway improvements
- hope development
- Convention and hotel space
- Housing (residential, commercial housing, hotels)
- Revamp
- Image change (3)
- Too many social service ...
- Get people to come downtown getting rid of the negative image people have of downtown
- Welcome all visitors and residents with signage
- Investment
- Downtown owners residences
- Use local people
- Encourage development of business to develop a critical mass to make the River district a place



Aerial View

River District Board of Directors

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 Thomas R. Walsh, Vice-President
 Cal DeWeerd, Secretary
 Walt Rebman, Treasurer
 Lawrence J. Morrissey, Past-President
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 Ryan Petty, ex-officio
 John Phelps
 Bette Spiekys, ex-officio

Framework Plan Steering Committee

Maggie Allen
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 Doug Brooks
 Roland "Chip" Chapdelaine
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 Karen Elyea
 Steve Ernst
 Wendy Perks Fisher
 Einar Forsman
 Becky Genoways
 Dan Gundrum
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 Pete Provenzano
 Judge Philip Reinhard
 Jim Ryan
 Sarah Skoriya
 Jeff Steward
 Al Werner
 Kim Wheeler
 Michael A. White
 Susan Williams

Riverfront Museum Park
 Amcore Bank
 Larson and Darby Architects
 Rock Valley College
 Burpee Museum of Natural History
 Minglewood
 City of Rockford, Traffic Engineering
 Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
 City of Rockford
 On the Waterfront
 Rockford Park District
 Hinshaw and Culbertson
 NAACP
 Resident
 City of Rockford, Community Development
 Rockford Park District
 MetroCentre Events Board
 William Charles Ltd.
 Octane/Downtown Restaurant Assoc.
 Morrissey Realty Group
 Winnebago County, Building Department
 Supply Core
 U.S District Judge
 City of Rockford, Public Works
 River District President RD
 Trekk Design
 River District Chairman Planning Committee
 River District Association
 Waterside Financial Group
 Rockford Area Arts Council

Project Management Team

Einar Forsman, City of Rockford
Ed McCullough, Rockford Park District
Sarah Skoriya, President, River District Association
Al Werner, Chairman, Planning Committee

Financial Supporters

City of Rockford
Rockford Park District
Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
Community Foundation of Northern Illinois
River District Association
Associated Bank
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